



Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Kenneth R. Bounds, Superintendent

August 12, 2005

Dear Interested Citizen:

After careful review and consideration, the Board of Park Commissioners at their July 28 meeting recommended that the synthetic turf renovation project at the Loyal Heights Playfield proceed as proposed by staff. Board members reviewed all correspondence, listened intently to the public testimony, and reviewed the historical record and prior policy documents before making their recommendation. Likewise, I have carefully reviewed the material, recently re-examined potential modifications to the Board recommendation, and ultimately concurred with the Board's recommendation. I have directed Parks and Recreation staff to move forward with the project. Considerable community involvement preceded the Park Board vote and my recommendation. I appreciate the time and effort that park neighbors devoted to the process.

I know many of you who corresponded with us will be disappointed by this decision, especially many of the adjacent neighbors. Many others will be delighted, especially field users. While we strived to find a compromise that would retain a portion of the field in natural grass, we were not able to develop an option that allowed the existing field users to enjoy the benefit of artificial turf and still retain significant space in natural grass. Given the fact that Loyal Heights has historically served as a playfield for neighborhood football, baseball, and softball leagues, and given the enormous shortage of adequate athletic field space in Seattle, especially in the greater Ballard community, I am convinced that this decision serves the greater good of Seattle park users. The primary use of the playfield has been and will continue to be for sports. A new, synthetic surface will not only allow the sports teams to play when scheduled, but will also extend the season and allow more Ballard area and other community teams to participate.

In addition, I am pleased to announce that Seattle Parks has identified funds for the Loyal Heights project that will pay for new field lights (the original budget has enough money for new lighting infrastructure, but not enough for the actual poles and lights). The new lighting will be installed concurrently with the surface renovation.

When compared to grass, a synthetic surface provides for safer play, requires no watering or pesticides, increases our field capacity, and is consistent with Seattle Parks and City policies. The increased capacity will occur primarily in the winter months---grass fields are closed from November to March. Extending the use of the field through the winter will primarily benefit Ballard youth soccer players who must practice and play outside of the neighborhood during the months the field is closed.

By a conservative estimate, Ballard youth soccer teams will gain 464 hours of play close to home. That translates into over 7,000 hours of exercise by neighborhood youth! While some of these hours may previously have been scheduled elsewhere, the ability for the local teams to stay



Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Kenneth R. Bounds, Superintendent

in the neighborhood means less traffic and pollution in our community. The story of a Queen Anne versus Ballard girls soccer game that was played in the City of Shoreline due to our lack of fields is an example of what we are trying to eliminate. In addition, Ballard Little League players and coaches will no longer have to dry the infield during those rainy periods, and will be able to actually play when scheduled. They estimate that as much as a third of their scheduled field time is lost due to rain.

Regarding neighborhood impacts, current scheduling allows for two baseball or softball games to be played concurrently, or one soccer game. That will remain the same with the new surface. The maximum number of people using the field at any specific time will not increase, and the parking analysis conducted by CTS Engineers when the fields were fully scheduled concluded that existing parking is sufficient for the upgrade. The change for the community will be that the number of fully scheduled hours will increase, with the change most notable during winter months.

Mitigation of the impacts of the park is partially addressed by Seattle Parks lighting policy which directs that the lights at Loyal Heights will be turned off at 10 p.m. To further address neighbor concerns about park impacts, Parks will not schedule games or practices for Sunday evenings, and will limit Saturday morning times to begin no earlier than 9 a.m. We will work with the leagues to manage player behavior, and we will not allow amplified sound.

Conversion to synthetic at Loyal Heights is supported by the following City and Parks policies:

- **Resolution 30181** (June 19, 2000) adopted the Parks and Recreation Plan 2000 which directed Parks to: “Consider the conversion of selected fields to artificial turf to increase scheduling capacity at locations such as the Lower Woodland baseball fields and Brighton and Loyal Heights Playfields.”
- **Resolution 30530** (October 7, 2002) directed Parks to: “Install synthetic turf at sites that currently have lights and install lights at those sites that already have synthetic or all weather turf before installing both lights and synthetic turf at sites that currently have neither.”

“Distribute field improvements throughout the City to the extent possible and install improvements in areas of the City that lack adequate field capacity relative to other areas.”

- **Parks Joint Athletic Facilities Development Program** (October 2000 and December 2002), approved by the Board of Park Commissioners, the Superintendent of Seattle Parks and Recreation, and the Mayor, includes Loyal Heights Playfield renovation and field conversion to synthetic.
-



Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Kenneth R. Bounds, Superintendent

Thank you for your interest in the playfield renovation project at Loyal Heights. We look forward to creating a playfield that will better serve the Ballard community.

Sincerely,
Kenneth R. Bounds
Superintendent, Seattle Parks and Recreation

cc: Board of Park Commissioners
Seattle City Council